



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE
BELFAST MAGAZINE,
AND
LITERARY JOURNAL.

No. V.—JUNE, 1825.—VOL. I.

EXCURSIONS IN ULSTER.

LETTER V.—LOUGH DERGH.

Pettigo, 23d July, 1824.

DEAR G—

WE arrived here at one o'clock; and, after remaining a short time to procure information and a guide, set out on foot for the far-famed Lough Dergh.

Its distance from this place is said to be only three miles and a half, but it must be confessed, that to us it appeared to be much farther. A country road leads in this direction for upwards of a mile; after leaving which, we passed over the mountains, following a path, which the number of devotees who visit the island had marked too distinctly to be mistaken. After walking for what appeared to us a very long time, over the heath-covered mountains, exposed to a burning sun, without a breeze of air to refresh us, though on so high a situation, we at length got a sight of Lough Dergh and its islands; and soon afterwards arrived at the lonely house of the boatman, who ferries the votaries over to their devotional exercises. A situation more solitary and bleak can scarcely be conceived, than that which has been chosen for this great religious station. The Lough, which is said to be about nine miles in circumference, is situated in the midst of high hills, which rise on all sides, without the slightest appearance of cultivation and are covered with heath from the base to the summit. In its whole circuit there are only four houses to be seen, which being situated on the sides of the barren mountains, and at a great distance from one another,

instead of enlivening the scene, rather tend to make it appear more melancholy.

The landing place presents a very busy scene, by the constant arrival of parties from the island, who, having performed their devotions, are returning to their homes, and of others coming, after their toilsome march over the mountains, to occupy the places of those who have departed. At the moment of our arrival, a boat approached the shore with a number of passengers, who having spent their allotted periods at the holy island, had from curiosity been visiting the other parts of the lake. On applying to the boatman for a passage, we were told that he could not carry us to the island without permission from the Prior, who resides there; and that we must wait until our letters of introduction had been sent forward, and an answer returned to our application.

While the boat in which we forwarded our letter of introduction to the Prior, and our request for liberty to land, crossed to the island full of devotees, we looked about for some place in which to obtain refreshment. Our guide informed us that the owner of the house near which we stood could provide us with what we wanted, but we found on inquiry that he had gone down to Pettigo. In this dilemma our honest guide offered to try what he could get in the neighbourhood. After a short time he returned, carrying in one hand a jug of milk, and in the other a bottle of whisky, which he had purchased at an illicit still in the mountains: and it must be confessed that we felt most grateful for what he had procured. As it was some time before the return of the boat, we amused ourselves in different ways: B——, in taking a drawing of the lake and island, of which he has given a most faithful delineation, the others in collecting minerals along the banks and shore, or talking of the various accounts we had read of Lough Dergh.

Camden gives the following particulars in his *Britannia*, which are interesting on account of the time at which his work was written:—

The Liffey near its source spreads itself into a lake, in which is an island, and near it by a small religious house, is a narrow vault celebrated for the appearance of certain spectres and frightful figures, or rather for some religious horror. This cave is ridiculously pretended by some to have been dug by Ulysses to hold conversation with the infernals. The present inhabitants call it *Ellan a'gradadory*, or the *island of Purgatory*, or *Patrick's Purgatory*. They affirm, with a pious credulity, that St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, or some Abbot of that name, obtained of God by his earnest prayers, that the pains and torments which await the wicked after this life, might be

here set forth to view, in order the more easily to recover the Irish from their sinful state and heathenish errors. As this place, however, is called Reglis in the life of St. Patrick, I should suppose it to be the other Regia mentioned by Ptolemy, and with this, the situation he assigns it corresponds. Besides this Patrick's Purgatory, there was another in this island called Brendan's Purgatory. But as I cannot discover its situation, take all I can find about it, which is in these four lines of Necham :

Assertit esse locum sollemnis fama dicatum
Brendano, quo lux lucida sæpe micat,
Purgandas animas datur hic transire per ignes,
Ut dignæ facie judicis esse queant.*

Such is the account given by the venerable Camden of this celebrated spot. In the new edition of the *Britannia*, edited by Gough, we find the following additional particulars, which are chiefly selected from Archdall and other writers on Irish Antiquities:—

Lough Derg or the *Red Lake*, said to have been formerly called *Fin Lough* or the *White Lake*, in the parish of Temple-carn, and barony of Tirhagh, has several islands, the largest called the island of *St. Dabeoc*, or *St. Fintan*, or *the island of Saints*, had a Priory of Canons regular of St. Austin, founded as some by St. Patrick, or as others about A.D. 492, by St. Dabeoc, who is said to have been buried in this Abbey, which he made subject to the great one at Armagh. It had a fine chapel with convenient houses for the monks; the remains of which may be seen. One of the St. Patrick's was Prior here about 850. St. Patrick's Purgatory was first fixed in this island, but it being near the shore, and a bridge giving the people a free and easy access into it, the cave was closed up, and another opened in a lesser island, half-a-mile from the shore, in extent scarce three-fourths of an Irish acre. A canon of the Priory of St. Dabeoc annually resided on the island, for the service of the church and pilgrims. Some give the invention of this Purgatory to the great St. Patrick; but others with more probability ascribe it to Patrick, Prior here about 850. It continued a long time in high repute both at home and abroad. We find in our own records, several safe conducts granted by the King of England to foreigners desirous of visiting it, and particularly 1358, to Malatesta Ungarus, or of Hungary, Knight, and to Nicholas de Beccario, a nobleman of Ferrara; and 1397, to Raymond, Vicount de Penulleux, Knight of Rhodes, with a train of 20 men and 30 horses. But this Purgatory must have fallen afterwards into disrepute; for we find that by the authority of Pope Alexander VI. it was demolished on St. Patrick's day, 1497, by the Father Guardian of the Franciscans of Donegal, and some other persons of the Deanry of Lough Erne, deputed for this purpose by the Bishop. It was afterwards restored and much resorted

* Here constant fame asserts there is a place
To Brendan sacred, with a flashing light.
Here souls thro' Purgatory's fires may pass,
To fit them for th' Almighty Judge's sight.

to ; nor was it fully laid open and suppressed until the reign of James the First, when some persons sent by the Government to inquire into it, found it was only a dark low cell cut in the rock, capable of holding six or eight persons, whose heads might be half turned by the preparatory fastings and fatigues, or by some private communications with the Monastery, the monks might act some of their pious frauds, and report the reveries of the frightened or emaciated penitents for real visions. The Lords Justices, 1630, turned the friars out of the island, ordered their cells to be demolished, and the cavern laid open to the air, to the no small distress and loss of the Roman Catholic Clergy.

The above extract contains a summary of what is to be found in the different works which mention Lough Dergh ; and seems in most particulars tolerably accurate. One thing, however, should be observed; I do not believe there was at any time a monastery on the island, at present used as the place for the religious meetings; but there may have been an establishment of this kind on the other island, mentioned as having been near the shore.

Since the time when the Lords Justices put a stop to the station at Lough Dergh, the island has again become a place for the resort of pilgrims in the months of June, July, and August: and has in latter times been brought into notice by Pope Benedict the 14th, who preached and published a sermon in its favour. Among other penal statutes passed against the Irish Catholics, the 2d of Anne, Caput 7, sec. 26, particularly provides against the holding of stations at Lough Dergh, making the meetings there illegal. By it, persons so assembling become liable to a penalty of ten shillings each: or in default are liable to be whipped within twenty four hours, at the option of the committing magistrate: one half of the fine to go to the informer, and the other to the poor of the parish. Persons erecting booths for the sale of refreshments on such occasions, are subject to a fine of twenty shillings.

Sir James Ware, in his antiquities, gravely attempts to show the probability that the cave at Lough Dergh had been dug by Ulysses, to hold converse with the inhabitants of the infernal regions. He produces Homer as his chief witness, and attempts to prove that the poet Claudian alludes to the same place, where he describes the ascent of the fury Megæra, to rouse into action the evil dispositions of Rufinus—

I am inclined to think (says Sir James) as it is historically related, or poetically feigned by Homer, Ulysses was in Ireland one of the British islands, or in Britain itself. This Circe implies in her instructions to Ulysses (in Homer) in his voyage to Hell, where she tells him what wind would be happy and what course he ought to steer at sea, and to this belongs that of Claudian in *Rufinum*, Lib. 1.—

Est locus, extremum qua pandit Gallia littus,
 Oceani prætentus aquis, ubi fertur Ulysses
 Sanguine libato populum movisse silentem.
 Illic umbrarum tenui stridore volantum
 Flebilis anditur questus, simulacra coloni
 Pallida defunctas-que vident migrare figuras.
 Hinc Dea prosiliit, Phœbique egressa serenos
 Infecit radios, ululatuque æthera rupit
 Terrifico, sensit færale Britannia murmur,
 Et Senonum quatit arva fragor, revolutaque Tethys
 Substitit, et Rhenus projecta torpuit urna.*

To which we add this Tetrastich of John Garland, Lib. 3, de triumphis ecclesiæ, where speaking of John, King of England, he says,

Evertit nemora Hibernica variis bellis,
 Ad Stygis introitus Patricique lacus,
 Purgunt (ut dicunt) hic Purgatoria vivos,
 Si sint constanti pectora fixa fide.†

With regard to the cave so often mentioned, it may be proper to state that it no longer exists, having been filled up some years ago. On this subject, I had many conversations with an old man, a teacher of the Irish language at Belfast, who has performed two pilgrimages to Lough Dergh. According to his account, the cave existed at the time of his first visit to the island, in the year 1780, having been repaired most probably in the reign of Charles II., or James II. It was, he says, a very small place dug in the rock, capable of holding about twelve persons, and was the last spot visited before leaving the island by the pilgrims, who spent the night in it in rotation. On his last visit in 1819, he found that it had been filled up more than thirty years before by order of the Prior, having been considered as dangerous, from the number of persons who attempted to crowd into it at once. Its place is now occupied by a chapel dedicated to St. Patrick, and large enough to contain the people without inconvenience.

Mr. M. M——, my informant, spent six days at the island on his last visit to Lough Dergh, during which time he preserved as strict a fast as possible, and was constantly engaged

* Where haughty Gaul extends her furthest shore,
 There lies an island mid the ocean's roar;
 Here, his libations being duly made,
 'Tis said Ulysses moved each silent shade.
 A deep complaint was heard among the crowd,
 Who, as they fled, all shrilly shrieked aloud—
 In silent dread th' astonish'd natives view
 The dead before them pass, and ghosts of pallid hue—
 Hence rush'd the fury, at whose baleful sight,
 Phœbus withdrew his beams of heavenly light,
 Then thro' the air she sent a horrid roar,
 Its savage echoes reached Britannia's shore,
 The fields of Seno shook, ocean stood still,
 And torpid Rhine forgot his urn to fill.

† He overthrew the groves of Ireland in his various wars [at the entrance to Styx, and the Lake of St. Patrick: where 'tis said there is a Purgatory which cleanses the living, provided they have in their hearts a firm faith.

in attending divine service in the different chapels. The only food he took was bread and water, and this was limited to one meal in the day, when he eat half a pound of bread only.

After remaining for a considerable time waiting for the arrival of the boat, which did not return without its full complement of passengers, we at length procured liberty to proceed to the island. The boat in which the pilgrims are conveyed to it, and in which we now embarked, had at one time been a large decked pleasure boat, and was purchased at Donegal for this purpose, and transported by the zeal of the people over the mountains for many miles—no very easy task, if we may judge from the appearance of the country. The deck has now been removed, and the hull fitted up with cross benches for the accommodation of the passengers, of whom it contains from sixty to eighty at a time. It is propelled by two large sweeps or oars, each of which is worked by one man, who generally, however, has the assistance of some of the passengers.

The appearance of the barren shore, with persons wandering up and down, waiting until their turn shall arrive to be carried over, and the melancholy air of the passengers, who seemed in general strangers to one another, joined to the deep silence which prevailed, called to mind the idea which we have formed of Charon's boat, from the description of the ancient poets. A painter who wished to make a painting of the river Styx, the ferryman and his boat, with the groups of expectant shades on the banks, could not perhaps find a happier subject, than the scene that Lough Dergh presents at this season of the year.

The silence of our party was only interrupted by a conversation between B—— and an old man who steered the boat, to whom he showed the sketch of the Lough and islands which he had just taken, asking him at the same time if it were like; having examined it attentively, the old man said, "it was not in the least like it." "Not like it?" said B. "No, not a bit like it when you get to it; it's like enough what it is when you see it from the shore where you were sitting, but that's not a bit like the island when you get to it; it's far larger than that, and you'll see so when you come to it." With this unintentional compliment the conversation ended, and silence again reigned amongst us. In a short time after, we arrived at the island, when we were met at one of the gates of the water wall, by the Prior, who kindly offered to conduct us through the island.

The island, which has been fitted up for devotional purposes, is very small. It lies about half a mile from the shore,

and is so low as to be nearly on a level with the surface of the water; and it does not measure more than three hundred paces in any direction. It is covered with buildings, none of which, however, are of very ancient date, but all seem to have been lately erected. There are in all six houses, crowded together, and for the most part fitted up as places of worship. That nearest the landing place is occupied by the Prior and other Clergymen officiating on the island; and from it there runs a wall which cuts off the communication with the water, and prevents any persons from mingling with the devotionals without authority. At the time of our visit, there were (we were informed) about 900 persons present, who were either engaged attending service in the chapels, (of which some are set apart exclusively for the women, and others are occupied by the men) or sat without, reading books of devotion. In some places we observed groups of persons sitting on the ground, around one who stood in the centre; these in general seemed to be persons who could not read, and to whom one of the better educated pilgrims read in a low tone of voice. Towards the centre of the island there is an ancient cross, but in a very mutilated state; and near the chapels there are a number of circular enclosures, called beds, dedicated to different Saints. The penitents visit these in rotation, and a certain form of prayer is repeated at each. There are I think six of these beds, and they seem to be the most ancient works on the island. Each of them consists of a small portion of ground enclosed by a circular stone wall, about a foot high; in one side of which a small opening had been left by way of entrance. According to Ledwich, these beds are dedicated to St. Patrick, Saints Abogie and Molaishe, St. Brendan, St. Columbus, St. Catharine, and St. Bridget. Having spent a short time at his house, we took leave of the Prior, who accompanied us to the boat, and were soon after landed on the opposite shore, with a number of persons who had performed their religious duties and were now returning to their homes. Many of the pilgrims who have this year visited the island, had come from very distant places, some of them from France, and numbers even from America. Lough Dergh produces a very considerable rent to the proprietor of the estate in which it is situated. The regular pilgrims pay for their passage to and from the island sixpence halfpenny each, all of which goes to the landlord, who is also the proprietor of the boats. The boatmen, however, make strangers, who, like us, only visit it from curiosity, pay something above the regular fares, and we found it difficult to satisfy them as to what this sum should be.

The orderly appearance of the people we met in the

morning, had rather shaken the opinion I had formed of Lough Dergh; but our visit to the island changed it entirely. I had expected to find it similar to what I had heard Struile, and some other places of the same kind represented as being, at which a pretended religious feeling, is made a cloak for the commission of all kinds of irregularity; and the short bodily penance submitted to, seems to be considered as a sufficient apology for plunging more deeply into vice; where the morning is spent in superstitious observances, or the performance of pretended miracles, and the evening in the grossest debauchery. The station at Lough Dergh, however, is of a very different kind; and no person even of our religious persuasion can visit it, without being struck by the appearance of piety and religious fervour, which beams in every face. The devotees who visit it, remain at the island for a number of days, and during all the time are engaged in religious services in the chapels, where, besides the regular prayers, sermons are preached by the clergymen at stated hours. When they are supposed to be worthy of receiving it, the sacrament is administered to them, and each departs for his own home.

Having said so much on the deportment of the pilgrims while on the island, I may mention, that as far as we could observe, they still preserved the same correctness of conduct, after their departure: and we made this remark, not only in the neighbourhood of the place, but even at the distance of many miles from it, when they were no longer under any restraint from the presence of the clergy. The inn of the village from which I now write, has been crowded with pilgrims ever since our arrival. New parties are constantly coming and departing, breakfasting, dining, and supping in the house, yet we have never been disturbed in the least; nor have we, in any instance, remarked the slightest appearance of inebriety, or irregularity of any kind.

On landing from the boat, we were joined by our guide, who, we found, had comforted himself for our absence, with the society of the poteen bottle, to which he seemed to have paid assiduous court.—“Och! and I’m so glad to see yees again; and so yees got into the island after all, and so yees seen it all; och! and I’m so glad;”—and to express his joy he cut a caper half a yard high, doubtless to the no small scandal of our party, in the eyes of the grave pilgrims who were about us. Here also we found a curious and amusing urchin, who had followed us *nolentes volentes* from Pettigo, and was at length to his great delight engaged to carry our specimens to the inn. This urchin, whom M. sirnamed Flibberti Gibbett, afforded us a fund of amusement during our walk back to

Pettigo, sometimes playing tricks on our good humoured guide, and at other times by the quaint observations he made on every occasion when he could find an excuse for joining in our conversation, which he did not fail to do very frequently.

We arrived at Pettigo about six o'clock, completely tired by our walk, and found from the delay we had met with, that we must remain here during the night. To-morrow we shall set out for Ballyshannon, from whence I shall again address you. I am, &c. E—.

LETTER VI—CASTLE CALLWELL

Ballyshannon, 24th July, 1824.

DEAR G—,

Yesterday morning, we set out for this place, where we had arranged to dine, after having visited Castle Callwell on our way. About a mile from Pettigo we passed Castle Tarmon M'Grath, which is finely situated on the banks of Lough Erne, and is still in a state of tolerable preservation, particularly the side next the lake, which is almost entire. The entrance to it is towards the road, and passes through a large court-yard, defended at each side by round towers, which still remain, though in a dilapidated state. This was once a very magnificent structure, and the side next the lake exhibits workmanship of a very superior kind. The window sashes are of stone, and are in general perfect; and along the top there runs a projecting stone balcony, which seems to have gone round the entire building when perfect. M. & B. remained at the castle until the latter made a drawing of it; and in the meantime I proceeded with the car to meet them at the turn of the road, which was pointed out. On my way I endeavoured to procure some information respecting the history of the Castle from the country people. Unfortunately all I met with, could or would not tell any thing about it. One said it's Castle Tarmon; another, Castle Jarmon; a third, Castle M'Grath, and a fourth, joined all three together. It was a cruel ould place, according to one; a cruel big place by the account of the next; and an uncommon fine place in the opinion of another.

All that I could learn was from an old man, who, however, meted out his words very sparingly, and digressed from the subject continually; addressing at least one half of his conversation to a cow he was leading. According to his account, it had belonged to a Bishop, of whom he seemed to entertain no very favourable opinion, in consequence, I found, of a tradition, that he had apostatized from his own creed, and that this castle was the reward of his apostacy; this was all he knew